Spinoza, BENEDICTUS DE, a Jew by birth, and afterwards a deserter from Judaism, and lastly an atheist, was from Amsterdam. He was a systematic atheist who employed a totally new method, though the basis of his theory was the same as that of several other ancient and modern philosophers, both European and Oriental. With regard to the latter, it is only necessary to read what I reported in remark D of the article "Japan" [not included in these selections], and what I shall say below about the theology of a Chinese sect (B). I have not been able to learn anything special about Spinoza's family, but there are grounds for believing that they

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B. *(What I shall say . . . about the theology of a Chinese sect.)* The name of that sect is *Foe Kiao.* It was established by royal authority among the Chinese in the year 65 of the Christian era. Its first founder was the son of the king *In Fan Vam,* and was at first called *Xe* or *Xe Kia,* and then, when he was thirty years old, *Foe,* that is to say, "not man." The Prolegomena of the Jesuits prefacing the edition of Confucius that they published in Paris treats amply of this founder. We find there, "that he, having retired into the desert when he reached his nineteenth year and having put himself under the discipline of four Gymnosophists in order to learn philosophy from them, remained under their instruction until he was thirty years old, when, rising one morning before daybreak and contemplating the planet Venus, the mere sight of it gave him at once a perfect knowledge of the first principle, so that being full of divine inspiration, or rather of pride and madness, he undertook to instruct men, represented himself as a god, and attracted eighty thousand disciples. . . . At the age of seventy-nine, finding himself near death, he told his

were poor and not very important. He studied Latin under a physician[a] who taught it at Amsterdam, and he applied himself at an early age to the study of theology, to which he devoted several years. After this he devoted himself completely to the study

disciples that, for the forty years he had preached to the world, he had not told the truth to them; that he had concealed it under a veil of metaphors and figures of speech; but that it was time to tell it to them. 'It is,' he said, 'that there is nothing to seek, nor anything to put one's hopes on, except the nothingness and the vacuum that is the principle of all things.' "[26] Here is a man very different from our freethinkers; they cease combating religion only at the end of their

[a] Named François Van der Ende. Note that Kortholt, in the Preface to the second edition of his father's *De tribus impostiborus,* says that a young woman taught Spinoza Latin, and that she later married Keckering, who was her student at the same time Spinoza was. [Recent examination of the seventeenth-century theological and philosophical manuscripts of the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam convinces the translator that a knowledge of Latin was not unusual in this group at that time, especially since many of the leaders—Morteira, Orobio de Castro, etc.—were graduates of Catholic universities in Spain and Italy and had taught or worked there. The Spinoza commentators who have made much of the contention that the Amsterdam Jewish community was cut off from the Latin world, and that Spinoza had to leave the community, in order to obtain Latin materials and a knowledge of the language; are, possibly, very much mistaken about both the local situation of the time and the personal background of the leaders of Amsterdam Jewry then. Many of the manuscripts preserved in Amsterdam indicate that the Jewish leaders were *au courant* with materials published in Latin, French, Spanish, Italian, etc., in theology, philosophy and science; and that they were, or had been, in personal contact with Christian theologians, philosophers, and scientists. Since most of the leading figures of Amsterdam Jewry at that time had been Marranos, that is, crypto-Jews, in Spain and Portugal, they had lived for some time at least in a non-Jewish world where Latin was the intellectual language. Some of them (including Menasseh ben Israel) had published works in Latin. And they were most concerned with intellectual issues in the theological, philosophical, and scientific spheres of Christendom. In terms of the rich body of materials that still exists in Amsterdam, it will be necessary to re-evaluate Spinoza's intellectual relationship to the Jewish community of the time, and many of the traditional myths on this subject will have to be abandoned. The publication by Professor I. S. Révah, of Paris, *Spinoza et Juan de Prado* (The Hague: Mouton, 1959), is the first important indication of this.]

[26] *Bibliothèque universelle,* VII, 403–404, in the extract [or resumé] of the same book of Confucius.

of philosophy. Since he had a mathematical mind and wanted to find a reason for everything, he soon realized that rabbinical doctrine was not for him. As a result, it was easily seen that he disapproved of Judaism in several respects; for he was a man who was averse to any constraint of conscience and a great enemy of dissimulation. This is why he freely set forth his doubts and his

lives. They give up their libertinism only when they believe that time for leaving the world is at hand. But *Foe* finding himself in this state began to announce his atheism. . . . His method was the reason why his disciples "divided their doctrine into two parts, one exterior, which is the one that is publicly preached and taught to the people, the other interior, which is carefully hidden from the common people and made known only to the initiates. The exterior doctrine, according to the bonzes, is 'only like the frame on which the arch is built, and which is later taken away when one has completed the building. It consists in teaching: (1) that there is a real difference between good and evil, justice and injustice; (2) that there is another life in which one will be punished or rewarded for what one will do in this one; (3) that happiness can be attained by means of thirty-two figures and eighty qualities; (4) that *Foe* (or *Xaca*) is a deity and the saviour of mankind, that he was born out of love of them, taking pity on the disorder in which he saw them, that he expiated their sins, and that by this expiation they will obtain salvation after death, and will be reborn happier in another world.' " To this are added five moral precepts and six works of mercy, and damnation is threatened to those who neglect these duties.

"The interior doctrine that is never revealed to the common people because they have to be kept in their place by the fear of hell and other stories of that kind, as these philosophers say, is, according to them, however, the solid and true doctrine. It consists in laying down as the principle and goal of all things a certain *vacuum* and *real nothingness*. They say that our first parents came forth from this vacuum and that they returned there after death; that it is the same with all men, who are changed back into this principle by death; that we, all the elements, and all creatures make up part of that vacuum; that thus there is but one and the same substance, which is different in particular beings only by the shapes and qualities or interior configuration, somewhat like water, which is always essentially water,

beliefs. It is said that the Jews offered to tolerate him, provided that he would conform outwardly to their ceremonial practices, and that they even promised him an annual pension, but that he could not submit to such hypocrisy. However, he estranged himself little by little from their synagogue; and perhaps he would have kept up some degree of contact with them for a longer

though it take the form of snow, hail, rain, or ice." If it is monstrous to maintain that plants, animals, men are really the same thing and to base this on the claim that all particular beings are not distinct from their principle, it is still more monstrous to assert that this principle has no thought, no power, no virtue. This is nevertheless what these philosophers say. They make the sovereign perfection of that principle consist in inaction and absolute rest. . . . Spinoza has not been so absurd. The only substance he admits always acts, always thinks; and he could not by his most general abstractions divest it of action and thought. The foundations of his theory cannot let him do this.

Quietism taught and practiced by the Chinese. Note in passing that the followers of *Foe* taught quietism; for they say that all those who seek true happiness ought to allow themselves to be so absorbed in profound meditations that they make no use of their intellect, but, by a complete insensibility, sink into the rest and inaction of the first principle, which is the true means of perfectly resembling it and partaking of happiness. They assert also that after one has reached this state of quietude, he should follow the ordinary course of life outwardly and teach others the commonly received doctrine. It is only in private and for his internal use that it is necessary for one to practice the contemplative institute of beatific inaction. . . . Those who attached themselves most ardently to the contemplation of this first principle formed a new sect called *Vu Guei Kiao,* that is to say, the sect of the idle or of the do-nothings. It is thus that among the monks those who are most concerned with the strictest observance form new societies or a new sect. The greatest lords and the most illustrious persons allowed themselves to become so infatuated with this quietism that they believed that insensibility was the road to perfection and happiness, and that the more one approached the nature of a stump or a stone, the more one made progress, the more one became like the first principle to which one would one day return. It was not enough to be without any bodily movement for several hours; it was also neces-

time had he not been treacherously attacked by a Jew who struck him with a knife when he was leaving the theater. The wound was minor but he believed that the assassin's intention was to kill him. After this event he broke off from the Jewish community, and this was the cause of his excommunication. I have looked into the circumstances of it without having been able to dig them out.[c] He wrote an apology in Spanish for his quitting the synagogue. This work has never been published. However,

sary that the soul be immobile and that one lose all sensation. . . . A follower of Confucius refuted the impertinences of this sect and proved very amply the Aristotelian maxim that nothing comes from nothing; however, the sect went on and grew, and there are many people today who attach themselves to these vain contemplations. If we did not know of the extravagances of our quietists, we would believe that the writers who tell us about these speculative Chinese have not understood well and have not reported well what was going on. But after what takes place among the Christians, it would be wrong to be incredulous about the insanity of the sect *Foe Kiao* or *Vu Guei Kiao*.

I am willing to believe either that what those men mean by *Cum hiu* is not exactly expressed or that their ideas are contradictory. It is claimed that these Chinese words signify "vacuum and nothingness," *vacuum et inane*, and this sect was attacked by the axiom that nothing comes from nothing. Therefore it must be that it is claimed that they taught that nothing is the principle of all beings. I cannot convince myself that they took the word "nothing" in its strict sense, and I imagine that they understood it as people do when they say that there is nothing in an empty chest. We have seen that they ascribe attributes to the first principle that suppose that they conceive it as a liquor.[38] It is therefore probable that they divested it only of what is gross and sensible in matter. On this basis the disciple of Confucius would have been guilty of the sophism called *ignoratio elenchi*; for he would have understood by *nihil* ("nothing") that which has no existence, and his adversaries would have understood by the same word that which has no properties of sensible matter. I believe that they understood by that word something very much like what modern thinkers under-

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[c] This is taken from a memoir sent to a bookseller.

[38] "Pure," "limpid," "subtle" are terms that they use.

it is known that he put many things in it that later appeared in his *Tractatus theologico-politicus,*[d] published in Amsterdam in 1670, a pernicious and detestable book in which he slips in all the seeds of atheism that were plainly revealed in his *Opera posthuma.* Stoupp unjustly insults the ministers of Holland for not having answered the *Tractatus theologico-politicus.* What he says is not always pertinent (E). When Spinoza turned to philosophical studies, he quickly became disgusted with the usual theories and was wonderfully pleased with that of Des-

stand by the term "space"; the modern thinkers, I say, who, not wishing to be either Cartesians or Aristotelians, maintain that space is distinct from bodies and that its indivisible, impalpable, impenetrable, immobile, and infinite extension is something real. The disciple of Confucius could have proven easily that such a thing cannot be the first principle if it be otherwise destitute of activity, as the contemplative Chinese claim. An extension as real as you please cannot serve for the production of any particular being if it is not moved; and if it be supposed that there is no mover, the production of the universe will be equally impossible, whether there be an infinite extension or whether there be nothing. Spinoza would not deny this thesis; but he does not get into such perplexities since he does not contend for the inaction of the first principle. Abstract extension, which he ascribes to it in general, is only the idea of space, properly speaking; but he adds movement to it; and thus the varieties of matter can arise.

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E. *(What he says is not always pertinent.)* Does he not say that according to Spinoza religions have been invented to lead men to apply themselves to virtue, not on account of the rewards of the next world, but because virtue is excellent in itself, and because it is advantageous during this life? Is it not certain that this atheist never thought of this and could never have reasoned so without making himself ridiculous? All the religions of the world, the true one as well

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[d] See the book of Van Til, minister and professor of Dortrecht, entitled *Het Voorhof der Heidenen voor de Ongeloovigen geopent.* The *Journal of Leipzig* for 1695 speaks of it.

cartes. He felt such a strong passion to search for truth that to some extent he renounced the world to be better able to carry on that search. He was not content with having removed himself from all sorts of affairs; he also left Amsterdam because his friends' visits interrupted his speculations too much. He retired to the country, he meditated there at his leisure, and he worked on microscopes and telescopes there. He kept up this kind of life after he settled in The Hague; and he gained so much pleasure from meditating, from putting his meditations in order, and from communicating them to his friends, that he allowed very little time for mental recreation; and sometimes he let three whole months go by without setting foot outside his lodgings. This retired life did not hinder the spreading of his name and reputation. Freethinkers came to him from all over. The court of the Palatinate wanted him and offered him a chair as professor of philosophy at Heidelberg. He turned it down as a post that would be little compatible with his desire to search after truth without any interruption. When he was a little more than forty-four years old, he sank into a long illness that ended his life on February 21, 1677. I have heard it said that when the

as the false ones, turn on this great pivot, that there is an invisible judge who, after this life, punishes and rewards the actions of mankind, both exterior and interior. It is from this that the principal value of religion is supposed to flow. It is the principal motive that would have influenced those who might have invented it. It is evident enough that in this life good actions do not lead to temporal well-being, and that bad ones are the most usual and the surest means of making one's fortune. To prevent a man, then, from plunging himself into crime, and to lead him to virtue, it would have been necessary to propose to him some punishments and rewards after this life. This is the strategem that the freethinkers attribute to those that they claim were the first authors of religion. This is what Spinoza should have thought, and it is doubtless what he did think. Thus Stoupp has not understood him on this point and has interpreted him as holding the opposite view. I am surprised that this mistake has been left in the supplement to Moreri, in an article bearing the name of Simon.

Prince de Condé was at Utrecht, he asked him to come and see him. Those who were acquainted with him, and the peasants of the villages where he had lived in retirement for some time, all agree in saying that he was sociable, affable, honest, obliging, and of a well-ordered morality. This is strange; but, after all, we should not be more surprised by this than to see people who live very bad lives even though they are completely convinced of the Gospel. Some people claim that he followed the maxim, "Nobody grows very bad suddenly," and that he only fell into atheism gradually and that he was far from it when he published the geometrical demonstration of Descartes' principles. He is as orthodox in this work about the nature of God as Descartes himself; but it must be said that he did not speak thus on account of his own convictions. It is not wrong to think that the ill use he made of some of this philosopher's maxims led him to the precipice. There are some people who consider the pseudonymous tract *De jure ecclesiasticorum,* which was published in 1665, as a precursor of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus.* All those who have refuted the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* have found in it the seeds of atheism, but nobody has developed this point as clearly as Johannes Bredenbourg (M). It is not as

Observe that those who deny the immortality of the soul and Providence, as the Epicureans did, are those who maintain that men should apply themselves to virtue on account of its excellence and because one finds enough advantage in the practice of morality in this life not to have anything to complain about. This is undoubtedly the doctrine Spinoza would have put forth if he had dared to dogmatize publicly.

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M. *(All those who have refuted the* Tractatus theologico-politicus *have found in it . . ., but nobody has developed this point as clearly as Johannes Bredenbourg.)* . . . Let us speak of Johannes Bredenbourg. He was a citizen of Rotterdam, who published a book

easy to deal with all the difficulties contained in that work as to demolish completely the system that appeared in his *Opera posthuma;* for this is the most monstrous hypothesis that could be imagined, the most absurd, and the most diametrically op-

in 1675, entitled *Joannis Bredenburgii enervatio tractatus theologico-politici, una cum demonstratione, geometrico ordine disposita* NATURAM NON ESSE DEUM, *cujus effati contrario praedictus tractatus unice innitur.*[80] He has put forth there in the fullest light what Spinoza had tried to wrap up and disguise, and he refuted it solidly. The world was surprised to see that a man who was not a scholar by profession and who had very little learning[81] had been able to penetrate so subtly into the principles of Spinoza and overthrow them with such success after having reduced them by a just analysis into such a state from which they could best appear with all their strength. I have heard a rather remarkable fact mentioned. I have been told that this author, having reflected for a very long time about his answer and about the principle of his adversary, finally found that this principle could be reduced to a demonstration. He then undertook to prove that there is no other cause of all things but a nature that exists necessarily, and which acts by an immutable, inevitable, and irrevocable necessity. He kept completely to the geometrical method; and after having constructed his demonstration, he examined it from all imaginable sides; he tried to find some defect in it and was never able to find any means of destroying it or even of weakening it. This caused him much vexation. He groaned about it; he sighed about it. He stormed against his reason, and he begged the most learned among his friends to help him in the search for the defect in this demonstration. However, he would not let anybody make a copy of it. Francis Cuper furtively copied it, contrary to the promise he had made.[82] This man, who was perhaps filled with the jealousy of an author (for he had written against Spinoza with much less success than Johannes

[80] It is a quarto of one hundred pages.

[81] He admits in his Preface that, because he did not feel himself capable of expressing himself in Latin, he had composed his book in Flemish and then had it translated into Latin.

[82] I have just learned that Cuper always denied this and always protested, as his friends still do, that he found the demonstration among Hartighvelt's papers, which he inherited.

posed to the most evident notions of our mind (N).* It might be said that Providence has punished the audacity of this author in a peculiar way by blinding him in such manner that, in order to avoid some difficulties that can cause trouble to a philosopher,

Bredenbourg), made use, some time afterwards, of this copy to accuse Bredenbourg of being an atheist. He published this in Flemish, along with some reflections. The accused defended himself in the same language. Several writings appeared on each side, which I have not read, for I do not understand Flemish at all.† Orobio, a very clever Jewish doctor,[83] and Aubert de Versé[84] got into this quarrel and took Cuper's part. They maintained that the author of the demonstration was a Spinozist, and consequently an atheist. As far as I have been able to understand the matter by hearsay, Bredenbourg defended himself by putting forth the usual distinction between faith and reason. He claims that just as the Catholics and the Protestants believe in the mystery of the Trinity, though it is opposed by the natural light, so he believes in free will, although reason furnishes him with strong proofs that everything happens by an inevitable necessity and con-

* [Remark N appears on p. 300.]

† [Though Bayle lived in Holland for a quarter of a century, he did not learn Flemish or Dutch.]

83 I have seen the treatise he published in Amsterdam, entitled *Certamen philosophicum propugnatae veritatis divinae ac naturalis adversus J. B. principia, etc.* It is in Latin and Flemish. [Orobio de Castro is an extremely interesting figure, who had been professor of metaphysics and theology at the University of Salamanca, in Spain. After being arrested by the Inquisition for secretly practicing Judaism, he escaped to France, where he became professor of pharmacy at the University of Toulouse. Then, desiring to practice Judaism openly, he went to Amsterdam where he became a medical practitioner and polemicist, fighting against various Christian theologians, as well as Spinoza and Juan de Prado. He also debated with Philip Limborch on the subject of the truth of the Christian religion, a debate that was published in 1687, the year Orobio died. John Locke either attended the debate, or was well acquainted with all the details, and seems to have been quite influenced by it. There are a great many manuscript works of Orobio in Amsterdam that have never been published. The work against Bredenbourg and Spinoza was published in Latin, though apparently written originally in Spanish. It was reprinted in the early eighteenth century in Fénelon, *Refutation des erreurs de Benoît Spinoza* (Brussels, 1731).]

84 I have something of what he has published in the same year, under the name of Latinus Serbaltus Sartensis. It is in Latin and Flemish.

he threw himself into other perplexities infinitely more inexplicable and so obvious that no balanced mind could ever be unaware of them. Those who complain that the authors who have

sequently that there is no religion. It is not easy to force a man out of such an entrenchment. One may cry out that he is not sincere; and that our mind is not made in such a way, that it can accept as true that which a geometrical demonstration shows is completely false. But is this not setting yourself up as a judge in a case in which it can be objected that you are not competent? Have we any right to decide what goes on in another's heart? Do we know the human soul sufficiently to declare that such and such a combination of views cannot be found in it? Have we not many examples of absurd combinations that are much closer to being contradictory than the one that John Bredenbourg sets forth? For it must be observed that there is no contradiction between these two things: (1) The light of reason teaches me that this is false; (2) I believe it nonetheless because I am convinced that this light is not infallible and because I prefer to submit to the proofs of feeling and to the impressions of conscience, in short, to the Word of God, than to a metaphysical demonstration. This is not at all the same as believing and not believing the same thing at the same time.* That combination is impossible, and nobody ought to be allowed to offer it as his justification. However that may be, the man of whom I am speaking showed that the feelings of religion and the hope of another life had maintained their ground in his soul against his demonstration; and I have been told that the indications he gave during his last illness do not allow his sincerity to be doubted. The Abbé de Dangeau[85] speaks of certain people who have religion in their minds but not in their hearts. They are convinced of its truth without their consciences being affected by the love of God. I believe that one can also say that there are people who have religion in their

* [In the last English edition of 1734–1741 a crucial mistranslation occurs at this point, where a negative is left out so that the sentence reads, "This is the same as believing and not believing the same thing at the same time." Some lines were left out of what follows, practically inverting Bayle's sense here, where he gives an excellent and clear statement of his views of the relationship of faith and reason.]

85 See his *Third Dialogue*, or the extract of it in the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, August 1684.

undertaken to refute him have not succeeded confound things. They would like to have the difficulties he succumbed to completely removed (O),* but it ought to suffice for them that his

hearts, but not in their minds. They lose sight of it as soon as they seek it by the methods of human reasoning. It escapes from the subtleties and the sophisms of their dialectic. They do not know where they are while they compare the pro and con. But as soon as they no longer dispute, and as soon as they listen only to the proofs of feeling, the instincts of conscience, the weight of education, and the like, they are convinced of a religion; and they conform their lives to it as much as human weakness permits. Cicero was like this. We can hardly doubt this when we compare his other books with that of the *De natura deorum* where he makes Cotta [the skeptic] triumph over the other interlocutors who maintained that there are gods.

Those who would like to know better the replies and equivocations that Spinoza made use of to avoid showing his atheism plainly, have only to consult the work of Christian Kortholt, *De Tribus Impostoribus*,[86] printed in Kiel in 1680. The author has there collected several passages from Spinoza and set forth all the poison and artifice there is in them. This is not the least curious part of the history and character of that atheist. Among other items, he cites his nineteenth letter,[88] in which he complains of the report being spread about that he had a book in the process of being published proving that there is no God at all.

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* [Remark O appears on p. 314.]

86 Namely, Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury; Thomas Hobbes; and Benedictus de Spinoza. [This is not the more famous work of the same title that portrays Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed as the three imposters. This latter work is much discussed in seventeenth-century literature, by Bayle among others; and grave doubts are raised as to whether it existed at that time. In the eighteenth century many manuscripts appeared as well as published copies. The work purports to be from the Middle Ages, and the first printed title page gives the date 1598. For information about it and its possible histories, see the recent edition, *De Tribus Impostoribus Anno MDIIC, Von den Drie Betrügern 1598,* translated by Rolf Walther, edited with an Introduction by Gerhard Bartsch (Berlin, 1960); and also the appendix, "De Tribus Impostoribus," in Don Cameron Allen, *Doubt's Boundless Sea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1964), pp. 224–243.]

88 Written to Oldenburg in 1675.

hypothesis has been completely overthrown as has been done by even the weakest of his adversaries. It must not be forgotten that this impious man did not know the inevitable consequences of his theory, for he made fun of the apparition of spirits, and there is no philosopher who has less right to deny it (Q). He ought to have recognized that everything in nature thinks, and that man is not the most enlightened and intelligent modification of the universe. He ought then to have admitted demons. The whole dispute by his followers about miracles is merely playing with words (R) and only serves to show even more the inexactitude of his ideas. He died, they say, completely convinced of his atheism, and he took precautions to keep any last-minute lapse from his principles from being found out, should it occur. If he had reasoned logically, he would not have treated the fear of hell as chimerical (T).* His friends claim that for modesty's sake he wished not to give his name to a sect. It is not true that his followers have been very numerous. Very few persons are suspected of adhering to his theory; and among those who are suspected of it, there are few who have studied it; and among the latter group, there are few who have understood it and have not been discouraged by the perplexities and the impenetrable abstractions that are found in it.[m] But here is what hap-

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N. *(The most monstrous hypothesis . . . the most diametrically opposed to the most evident notions of our mind.)* He supposes[90] that there is only one substance in nature, and that this unique substance is endowed with an infinity of attributes—thought and extension among others. In consequence of this, he asserts that all the bodies that exist in the universe are modifications of this substance in

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[90] Among his posthumous works see the one entitled *Ethics*.

* [Remarks Q, R, and T appear on pp. 317, 318, and 320, respectively.]

[m] It is for this reason that some persons think that it is not necessary to refute him. See the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, June 1684, Article VI [by Bayle].

pens. At first sight, all those are called Spinozists who have hardly any religion and who do not do much to hide this. It is in this way that in France all those are called Socinians who are thought to be incredulous about the mysteries of the Gospel although most of these people have never read either Socinus or any of his disciples. Besides, the same thing happened to Spinoza that is inevitable for those who construct systems of impiety. They defend themselves from certain objections, but they expose themselves to other more perplexing difficulties. If they cannot submit to orthodoxy, if they are so fond of disputing, it would be much more comfortable for them not to become dogmatists. But of all the hypotheses of atheism, Spinoza's is the least capable of misleading anybody; for, as I have already said, it opposes the most distinct notions in the human mind. Objections arise in crowds against him, and he can only make answers that are more obscure than even the thesis itself that he is obliged to maintain.[n] Thus his poison carries with it its own antidote. He would have been more formidable if he had employed all his strength to clarify a theory that is much in vogue among the Chinese (X),* and very different from the one of which I have spoken of in the second remark of this article. I have just learned a curious item, which is that after he had

so far as it is extended, and that, for example, the souls of men are modifications of this same substance in so far as it thinks; so that God, the necessary and infinitely perfect being, is indeed the cause of all things that exist, but he does not differ from them. There is only one being, and only one nature; and this nature produces in itself by an immanent action all that we call creatures. It is at the same time both agent and patient, efficient cause, and subject. It produces nothing that is not its own modification. There is a hypothesis that surpasses all the heap of all the extravagances that can be said. The most infamous things the pagan poets have dared to sing against Venus and Jupiter do not approach the horrible idea that Spinoza gives us of God, for

[n] Consult his letters. You will see that his letters almost never have anything to do with the point at issue.

* [Remark X appears on p. 323.]

renounced the profession of Judaism, he openly professed the Gospel and attended the meetings of the Mennonites or those of the Arminians of Amsterdam. He even approved of a confession of faith that one of his intimate friends communicated to him.

What is said of him in the continuation of the *Menagiana* is so false that I am surprised that Ménage's friends did not perceive this. De Vigneul-Marville would have made them suppress it if he had had a share in the edition of that book, for he has told the public "that there is reason to doubt the truth of that fact." The reasons he sets forth for his doubt are very just. He would not have gone too far if he decisively insisted upon the negative. We will take note of a mistake he made on the same page. Let us say something about the objections I have proposed against Spinoza's theory. I could add a very ample supplement to them if I did not think that they were already too long, in view of the nature of my work. Here is not the place to engage in a regular dispute. It will suffice for me to set forth some general observations that attack the foundations of Spinozism, and that show that it is a system that is based on so strange a supposition that it overthrows most of the common notions that serve to regulate philosophical discussions. To attack this

at least the poets did not attribute to the gods all the crimes that are committed and all the infirmities of the world. But according to Spinoza there is no other agent and no other recipient than God, with respect to everything we call evil of punishment and evil of guilt, physical evil and moral evil. Let us touch on some of the absurdities of his system.

That according to Spinoza God and extension are the same thing. I. It is impossible that the universe be one single substance; for everything that is extended necessarily has parts, and everything that has parts is composite; and since the parts of extension do not subsist in one another, it must be the case either that extension in general is not one substance, or that each part of extension is a particular substance distinct from all the others. Now, according to Spinoza extension in general is the attribute of one substance. He admits, along with all other philosophers, that the attribute of a substance does not

system by its opposition to the most evident and most universal axioms we have had up to now is no doubt a very good way of combatting it, although it is perhaps less fit for curing the old Spinozists than if it were made known to them that the propositions of Spinoza contradict one another. They would feel the weight of prejudice much less if they were forced to agree that he is not always in agreement with himself, that he proves poorly what he ought to establish, that he leaves items unproven that need to be established, that his conclusions do not follow logically, and so on. This method of attacking him by pointing out the absolute defects[q] of his work and the relative defects of the different parts of it compared with each other has been very well employed in some of the refutations of him. I have just learned that the author of a small Flemish book printed a few days ago has used this method forcefully and adroitly. But let us speak of the supplement that I am going to give. It consists of a clarification of the objection I have developed from the immutability of God (CC) and of the examination of the question whether it is true, as I have been told that several people claim, that I have not understood Spinoza's theory at all (DD).* This would be very strange since I have only endeavored to refute the proposition which is the foundation of his system and which he ex-

differ actually from that substance. Therefore he must acknowledge that extension in general is a substance. From which it necessarily follows that each part of extension is a particular substance, which destroys the foundations of the entire system of this author. He cannot say that extension in general is distinct from the substance of God; for if he said that, he would teach that this substance in itself is not extended. Then, it could never be able to acquire the three dimensions except by creating them, for it is obvious that extension can never arise or emanate from an unextended subject except by way of creation. Now Spinoza did not believe that nothing could be made

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q What is meant by this term are the errors that are not due to Spinoza's maintaining things contrary to the maxims that are generally received as true by other philosophers.

* [Remark CC appears on p. 325, DD on p. 329.]

presses with the greatest clarity. I have confined myself to opposing what he clearly and precisely sets forth as his first principle, namely, that God is the only substance that there is in the universe and that all other beings are only modifications of that substance. If one does not understand what he means by this, it is no doubt because he has given to the words a completely new signification without warning the reader. This is a capital way of becoming unintelligible by one's own doing. If there be any term which he has taken in a sense new and unknown to philosophers, it is apparently that of "modification." But in whatever sense he takes it, he cannot avoid being confounded. That is what can be seen in a remark in this article.[aa] Those who will carefully examine the objections I have proposed will easily perceive that I have taken the word "modification" in the sense in which it ought to be taken and that the consequences I have drawn and the principles I have used to combat these consequences accord exactly with the rules of reasoning. I do not know whether it is necessary that I say that the place that I attack and that has always appeared to me to be the weakest is the one that Spinozists care least to defend (EE).* I shall finish by saying that several persons have assured me that

from nothing. It is even more obvious that an unextended substance by its nature can never become the subject of three dimensions, for how would it be possible to place them on a mathematical point? They would therefore subsist without a subject. They would then be a substance; so that, if this author admitted a real distinction between the substance of God and extension in general, he would be obliged to say that God would be composed of two substances distinct from one another, namely his unextended being and extension. We see him thus obliged to recognize that extension and God are only the same thing; and since, in addition, he maintains that there is only one substance in the universe, he has to teach that extension is a simple being, as exempt from composition as the mathematical points. But is it

[aa] Remark DD [p. 329. To designate this and footnote bb, Bayle used the letters a and b.]

* [Remark EE appears on p. 338.]

his theory, even considered apart from the concerns of religion, has appeared very contemptible to the greatest mathematicians of our time.[bb] This will be easily believed if two things are remembered; one, that there are no persons who ought to be more convinced of the multiplicity of substances than those who apply themselves to the consideration of extension; the other, that most of these people admit a vacuum. Now there is nothing more opposed to Spinoza's theory than to maintain that all bodies do not touch each other; and there have never been two systems more opposite than his and that of the Atomists. He is in agreement with Epicurus in what concerns the rejection of Providence, but in all the rest of their systems they are like fire and water.

I have just read a letter in which it is claimed that "he [Spinoza] lived for some time" in the city of Ulm; "that the magistrate made him leave because he spread his pernicious doctrine there," and "it is there that he began his *Tractatus theologico-politicus*." I greatly doubt all this. The author of the letter adds that "his father, while he was still a Protestant, was a good friend of Spinoza, and that it was as a result of his attentions that that extraordinary genius left the sect of the Jews."

not a joke to maintain this? Is this not to fight against the most distinct ideas we have in our minds? Is it not more evident that the thousandth number is composed of a thousand unities than even that a body of a hundred inches is composed of a hundred parts actually distinct from one another, each having one inch of extension?

That extension is composed of parts which are each a particular substance. Let no one come and urge objections to us against the imagination and the prejudices of the senses; for the most intellectual notions, and the most immaterial ones, make us see with complete evidence that there is a very real distinction between things, one of which possesses a quality and the other of which does not. The Scholastics have perfectly well succeeded in showing us the characteristics

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[bb] Among others, those mentioned to me are Huygens, Leibniz, Newton, Bernoulli, and Fatio.

and the infallible signs of distinction. When one can affirm of a thing, they tell us, what one cannot affirm of another, they are distinct; things that can be separated from one another with regard to time or place are distinct. Applying these characteristics to the twelve inches of a foot of extension, we will find a real distinction between them. I can affirm of the fifth that it is contiguous to the sixth, and I deny this of the first, the second, and so on. I can transpose the sixth to the place of the twelfth. It can then be separated from the fifth. Observe that Spinoza cannot deny that the characteristics of distinction employed by the Scholastics are very just; for it is by these marks that he recognizes that stones and animals are not the same modality of infinite being. He admits then, I will be told, that there is some difference between things. It is most necessary that he admit it since he was not enough of a madman to believe there was no difference between himself and the Jew who struck him with a knife, or to dare to say that in all respects his bed and his room were the same being as the emperor of China. What then did he say? You are about to see. He taught not that two trees were two parts of extension, but two modifications. You will be surprised that he worked so many years constructing a new system, since one of its principal pillars was the alleged difference between the word "part" and the word "modification." Could he promise himself any advantage from this change of words? Let him avoid as much as he wants the word "part"; let him substitute as much as he wants the word "modality" or "modification"; what does this accomplish? Will the ideas attached to the word "part" vanish? Will they not be applied to the word "modification"? Are the signs and characteristics of difference less real or less evident when matter is divided into modifications than when it is divided into parts? Poppycock! The idea of matter still continues to be that of a composite being, that of a collection of several substances. Here follows what will prove this.

Incompatible modalities require distinct subjects. Modalities are beings that cannot exist without the substance they modify. It is therefore necessary that there be substance everywhere for modalities to exist. It is also necessary that it multiply itself in proportion as incompatible modifications are multiplied among themselves, so that wherever there are five or six of these modifications, there are also five or six substances. It is evident, and no Spinozist can deny it, that a square shape and a round one are incompatible in the same piece of

wax. It must necessarily then be the case that the substance modified by a square shape is not the same substance as that modified by a round one. Thus, when I see a round table and a square one in a room, I can assert that the extension that is the subject of the round table is a substance distinct from the extension that is the subject of the other table; for otherwise it would be certain that a square shape and a round one would be at the same time in one and the same subject. Now this is impossible. Iron and water, wine and wood, are incompatible. Therefore they require subjects distinct in number. . . . All this shows that extension is composed of as many distinct substances as there are modifications.

The immutability of God is incompatible with the nature of extension. Matter actually allows for the division of its parts. II. If it is absurd to make God extended because this would divest him of his simplicity and make him consist of an infinite number of parts, what will we say when we consider that this is reducing him to the condition of matter, the lowest of all beings, and the one that almost all the ancient philosophers placed immediately above nonbeing? He who speaks of matter speaks of the theater of all sorts of changes, the battlefield of contrary causes, the subject of all corruptions and all generations, in a word, the being whose nature is the most incompatible with the immutability of God. The Spinozists, however, maintain that it allows for no division, but they support this claim by the most frivolous and lowest chicanery that can be imagined. They contend that for matter to be divided it is necessary that one of its portions be separated from the others by empty spaces, which never happens. It is most certain that this is a very bad way of defining division. We are as actually separated from our friends when the interval that separates us is occupied by other men ranged in a file as if it were full of earth. One overthrows, then, both our ideas and our language when one asserts to us that matter reduced to cinders and smoke is not divided. But what will they [the Spinozists] gain if we give up the advantage that their false way of defining the divisible gives us? Would we still not have enough proofs of the mutability and corruptibility of Spinoza's God? All men have a very clear idea of the immutable. They understand by this term a being that never acquires anything new, that never loses anything that it once had, that is always the same, both in its substance and in its ways of being. The clarity of this idea shows that we comprehend very distinctly what mutable being consists in.

It is not only a nature whose existence can begin and end, but a nature that, always subsisting in terms of its substance, can acquire successive modifications and lose accidents or forms that it has sometimes had. All the ancient philosophers have recognized that this continual series of generations and corruptions that is seen in the world neither produces nor destroys any portion of matter, and it is from this that they say that matter is "ingenerable" and "incorruptible" in terms of its substance while it is the subject of all the generations and corruptions. . . . It is the most obvious and most suitable example, however, that can be given of a mutable being, subject actually to all sorts of variations and interior changes. . . . The forms produced in matter are united to it internally and penetratively. It is their subject of inherence; and according to sound philosophy, there is no other distinction between them and matter than that which there is between modes and the thing modified; from which it follows that the God of the Spinozists is a nature actually changing, and which continually passes through different states that differ from one another internally and actually. It is therefore not at all the supremely perfect being, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). Observe that the Proteus of the poets, their Thetis, and their Vertumnus, the images and examples of inconstancy, and the foundation of the proverbs that denote the most bizarre fickleness in the heart of man would have been immutable gods if the God of the Spinozists was immutable; for it was never claimed that any change of substance occurred in them, but only new modifications. . . .

God cannot be the subject of inherence of man's thoughts since these thoughts are contrary to one another. III. We are going to see still more monstrous absurdities by considering the God of Spinoza as the subject of all the modifications of thought. The combining of extension and thought in a single substance is already a great problem; for it is not a question here of an alloy like that of metals, or a mixture like that of water and wine. That requires only *juxtaposition;* but the alloy of thought and extension ought to be an *identity;* thinking and being extended are two attributes *identified* with the substance. They are therefore *identified* with each other by the fundamental and essential rule of human reasoning.[96] I am sure that if Spinoza had found such a perplexity in another sect, he would have judged it unworthy of his attention; but he did not regard this to be so in his own cause,

[96] Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other.

so true is it that those who most contemptuously criticize the thoughts of others are most indulgent to themselves. He no doubt ridiculed the mystery of the Trinity; and he marveled that an infinity of people dared to speak of a Being terminated by three hypostases, he, who properly speaking, gives to the divine nature as many persons as there are persons on the earth. He regards as fools those who, admitting transubstantiation, say that a man can be at the same time in several places, alive in Paris, dead in Rome, and so on; he who maintains that the extended, unique, and indivisible substance is everywhere at the same time, cold here, hot elsewhere, sad here, elsewhere gay, and so on. This should be said in passing, but consider attentively what I am about to say. If there is anything certain and incontestable in human knowledge, it is this proposition, . . . two opposite terms cannot be truly affirmed of the same subject, in the same respect, and at the same time.[97] For example, it cannot be said without lying, "Peter is well, Peter is very sick: he denies this, and he affirms it," assuming that the terms always have the same relation and the same meaning. The Spinozists destroy this idea and falsify it in such a way that one can no longer know where they will be able to find the mark of truth; for if such propositions were false, there would be none that one could guarantee as true. One could then hope for nothing in a dispute with them; for if they are capable of denying this, they will deny any other argument that is offered them. Let us show that this axiom is completely false in their system, and let us assume at the outset as an incontestable maxim that all the names that are given to a subject to signify either what it does or what it suffers apply properly and physically to its substance and not to its accidents. When we say that iron is hard, iron is heavy, it sinks in water, it splits wood, we do not intend to say that its hardness is hard, that its heaviness is heavy, and so on. That language would be very extravagant. We intend to say that the extended substance of which it is composed resists, is heavy, sinks in water, divides wood. In the same way, when we say that a man denies, affirms, gets angry, caresses, praises, and the like, we ascribe all these attributes to the substance of his soul itself, and not to his thoughts as they are either accidents or modifications. If it were true then, as Spinoza claims, that men are modalities of God, one would speak falsely when one said, "Peter denies this, he wants that, he affirms

[97] See the logic of Coimbra, *In cap. X Aristotelis de praedicamentis,* and that of Burgerdicius, Bk. I, chap. 22.

such and such a thing"; for actually, according to this theory, it is God who denies, wants, affirms; and consequently all the denominations that result from the thoughts of all men are properly and physically to be ascribed to God. From which it follows that God hates and loves, denies and affirms the same things at the same time; and this according to all the conditions required to make false the rule mentioned above concerning opposite terms; for it cannot be denied that, taking all these terms with all possible rigor, some men love and affirm what other men hate and deny. Let us proceed further. The contradictory terms of willing and not willing belong at the same time to different men. It must be the case in Spinoza's system that they belong to that single and indivisible substance called God. It is God then who, at the same time, forms an act of will and does not form an act of will with regard to the same object. Two contradictory terms are then true of him, which is the overthrow of the first principles of metaphysics.[99] I know indeed that in the disputes about transubstantiation, a cavil is employed that may here be of help to the Spinozists. It is said that if Peter wills something at Rome that he does not will at Paris, the contradictory terms "willing" and "not willing" would not be true with regard to him; for since it is supposed that he wills at Rome, one would lie in saying that he does not will. Let us allow them this vain subtlety. Let us say only that just as a square circle is a contradiction, so also is a substance when it loves and hates the same object at the same time. A square circle would be a circle and not be one. There is a complete contradiction. . . . I say as much of a substance that hates and loves the same object. It loves it, and it does not love it, which is a direct contradiction. . . . Our man could not bear the slightest obscurities either in Aristotelianism, Judaism, or Christianity; and yet he embraced with all his heart a theory that unites together two terms as opposite as "square figure" and "circularity," and by which an infinity of discordant and incompatible attributes and all the variety and antipathy of the thoughts of the human race are true at one and the same time of a single, most simple, and indivisible substance. It is commonly said, "So many men, so many opinions." But according to Spinoza all the opinions of all men are in a single head. Simply to report such things is to refute them, is to show the contradictions clearly; for it is obvious either that nothing is impossible, not even

[99] Two contradictories cannot be simultaneously true. The same thing cannot be and not be in the same respect. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV. 3–4.

that two plus two equals twelve, or that there are in the universe as many substances as subjects that cannot be designated in the same way at the same time.

Another proof of what is said above, drawn from the wickedness of man's thoughts. IV. But if it be, physically speaking, a prodigious absurdity that a simple and single subject be modified at the same time by the thoughts of all mankind, it is an execrable abomination when this is considered from the point of view of morality. What then? The infinite being, the necessary being, the supremely perfect being would not be steady, constant, and immutable! Why did I say immutable? He will not be the same for a moment. His thoughts will succeed one another ceaselessly and without end. The same medley of passions and feelings will not recur twice. This is hard to digest, but here is something much worse. This continual mobility will retain much uniformity in this sense, that for one good thought the infinite being will always have a thousand foolish, extravagant, impure, and abominable ones. It will produce in itself all the follies, all the dreams, all the filthiness, all the iniquities of the human race. It will not only be the efficient cause of them, but also the passive subject, the subject of inhesion. . . . Several great philosophers, not being able to comprehend how it is consistent with the nature of the supremely perfect being to allow man to be so wicked and miserable, have supposed two principles, one good, and the other bad;[100] and here is a philosopher who finds it good that God be both the agent and the victim of all the crimes and miseries of man. Let men hate one another, let them murder one another in a forest, let them meet in armies to kill one another, let the conquerors sometimes eat the vanquished; this may be understood, because it is supposed that they are distinct from one another and that the *mine* and *thine* produce contrary passions in them. But that there should be wars and battles when men are only the modifications of the same being, when, consequently, only God acts, and when the God who modifies himself into a Turk is the same God in number as the God who modifies himself into a Hungarian; this is what surpasses all the monstrosities and chimerical disorders of the craziest people who were ever put away in lunatic asylums. Observe carefully, as I have already said, that modes do nothing; and it is the substances alone that act and are acted upon. This phrase, "the

100 See the articles "Manicheans," "Marcionites," and "Paulicians." [The second article here mentioned is not included in these selections.]

sweetness of honey pleases the palate," is only true in so far as it signifies that the extended substance of which the honey is composed pleases the tongue. Thus, in Spinoza's system all those who say, "The Germans have killed ten thousand Turks," speak incorrectly and falsely unless they mean, "God modified into Germans has killed God modified into ten thousand Turks," and the same with all the phrases by which what men do to one another are expressed. These have no other true sense than this, "God hates himself, he asks favors of himself and refuses them, he persecutes himself, he kills himself, he eats himself,[101] he slanders himself, he executes himself; and so on." This would be less inconceivable if Spinoza had presented God as an assemblage of distinct parts; but he has reduced him to the most perfect simplicity, to unity of substance, to indivisibility. He asserts therefore the most infamous and most monstrous extravagances that can be conceived, and much more ridiculous than those of the poets concerning the gods of paganism. I am surprised either that he did not see them, or if he did, that he was so opinionated as to hold on to his principle. A man of good sense would prefer to break the ground with his teeth and his nails than to cultivate as shocking and absurd a hypothesis as this.

Another proof of what is said above, drawn from the misery of man. V. Two more objections. There have been some philosophers impious enough to deny that there is a God. But they have not pushed their extravagances as far as to say that if he existed, he would not be of a perfectly happy nature. The greatest skeptics of antiquity have said that all men have an idea of God according to which he is a living being, happy, incorruptible, perfect in felicity, and not susceptible of any evil.[102] . . . Happiness was the most inseparable property contained in the idea of him. Those who deny him the authority over, and the direction of, the world at least leave him felicity and immortal beatitude. Those who made him subject to death at least say that he was happy all his life. It was no doubt an extravagance bordering on madness not to unite immortality and happiness in the divine nature. Plutarch refutes this absurdity of the Stoics very well.[104] . . . But no matter how foolish this dream of the Stoics was, it did not deprive the gods of their happiness during their lifetime. The Spinozists are per-

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101 The fable of Saturn devouring his own children is infinitely less unreasonable than what Spinoza asserts.

102 Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos* IX. 33.

104 Plutarch, *Moralia,* "De Stoicorum repugnantiis."

haps the only ones who have reduced the divinity to misery. Now what misery? Sometimes so great that it is thrown into despair, and it would annihilate itself if it could; it tries; it deprives itself of anything it can; it hangs itself; it jumps over precipices, not being able to bear the frightful grief any longer that devours it. These are not just declamations. This is an exact and philosophical language; for if man is only a modification, he does nothing. It would be an impertinent, comical, jocular way of expressing things to say, "Joy is merry, sadness is sad." In Spinoza's system, to say, "Man thinks, man afflicts himself, man hangs himself, and so on," would be expressing oneself in the same way. All these propositions ought to be said of the substance of which man is only a mode. How can it be imagined that an independent being who exists by himself and who possesses infinite perfections might be subject to all the miseries of mankind? If some other being forced it to vex itself, to feel pain, we would not find it so strange that it turned its own activity to making itself unhappy; we should say, "It must be obeying a *force majeure*; obviously it is giving itself the stone, colic, high fever, and madness in order to avoid a greater ill." But it is the only being in the universe. Nothing orders it, exhorts it, begs it. It is its own nature, Spinoza will say, that leads it to give itself in certain circumstances great vexation and very severe pain. But, I will reply to him, did you not find something monstrous and inconceivable in such a fatality? . . .

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The hypothesis of Spinoza would make all his conduct and his discourse appear ridiculous. VI. If I did not remember that I am not writing a book against this man, but merely a few brief remarks in passing, I would show many other absurdities in his system. Let us finish with this one. He has embarked on a hypothesis that would make all his work ridiculous, and I am very sure that on each page of his *Ethics* one could find some pitiful nonsense. First, I would like to know what he means when he rejects certain doctrines and sets forth others. Does he intend to teach truths? Does he wish to refute errors? But has he any right to say that there are errors? The thoughts of ordinary philosophers, those of Jews, and those of Christians, are they not modes of the infinite being, as much as those of his *Ethics*? Are they not realities that are as necessary to the perfection of the universe as all

his speculations? Do they not emanate from the necessary cause? How then can he dare to claim that there is something to rectify? In the second place, does he not claim that the being of which they are modalities acts necessarily, that it always goes on its course, that it cannot turn aside, cannot stop, nor, since it is the sole entity in the universe, can any external cause ever stop it or correct it? Then, there is nothing more useless than the lectures of this philosopher. Is it right for him, being only a modification of substance, to prescribe to the infinite being what he must do? Will this being hear him? And if he hears, could he profit from this? Does he not always act according to the entire extent of his powers, without knowing either where he is going or what he is doing? A man like Spinoza would sit absolutely still if he reasoned logically. "If it is possible," he would say, "that such a doctrine might be established, the necessity of nature would establish it without my book. If it is not possible, all of my writings would accomplish nothing."

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O. *(They would like to have the difficulties Spinoza succumbed to completely removed.)* We will not be mistaken, it seems to me, if we suppose that he only threw himself over this precipice by not having been able to comprehend either that matter is eternal and different from God, or that it has been produced from nothing, or that an infinite and supremely free mind, creator of all things, could produce a work such as the world. A matter that necessarily exists, and that nevertheless is destitute of activity and subject to the power of another principle, is not something that agrees with reason. We see no harmony between these three qualities. The idea of order opposes such a combination. A matter created from nothing is inconceivable, whatever efforts we make to form an idea of an act of will that might convert into a real substance that which was formerly nothing. This principle of the ancients, "Ex nihilo nihil fit," "From nothing, nothing comes," continuously presents itself to our imagination and shines there in so brilliant a manner that it stops us short in case we have begun to form any notion about the creation. Finally, that an infinitely good, infinitely holy, infinitely free God, being able to make creatures always holy and happy, should have preferred that they should be eternally criminal and miserable is something that troubles reason, and

all the more so since reason cannot reconcile the free will of man[107] with the quality of a being produced from nothing. Now it would be incomprehensible that man could deserve any punishment under a free, good, holy, and just Providence, without reconciling these two items. These are three difficulties that obliged Spinoza to look for a new system in which God would not be distinguished from matter and in which he acts necessarily and in accordance with the full extent of his powers, not outside of himself, but in himself. It follows from this supposition, that this necessary cause, setting no limits to its power and having as a rule of its actions neither goodness, nor justice, nor knowledge, but only the infinite force of his nature had to modify itself according to all possible realities; so that errors and crimes, pain and vexation, being modalities as real as truths, and virtues, and pleasures, must be contained by the universe. Spinoza thought that by this means he could satisfy the objections of the Manicheans against one principle. They are forceful only against the supposition that a unique principle acts by choice, that it can act or not act, and that it limits its power in accordance with the rules of its goodness and equity, or in accordance with malicious instinct. Supposing this, one asks, "Where does evil come from if this unique principle is good?" Spinoza would reply, "Since my unique principle has the power to do evil and good and does all that it can do, it is completely necessary that there be good and evil in the universe." Weigh, I beg you, on an impartial balance the three difficulties that he wished to avoid and the extravagant and abominable consequences of the hypothesis that he adopted. You will find that his choice is not that of a good man or of a man of judgment. He gave up some things, of which the worst that can be said is that the weakness of our reason does not allow us to know clearly if they are possible, and he embraces others the impossibility of which is manifest. There is a great deal of difference between not understanding the possibility of a thing and understanding the impossibility of it. Now see the injustice of readers. They claim that those who write against Spinoza are obliged to show them with the utmost clarity the truths which he [Spinoza] could not understand, the difficulties of which forced him into another theory. And because they do not find this in the anti-Spinoza writings, they announce that these works are unsuccessful. Is it not enough that the edifice of this atheist has been overthrown? Good sense tells us that

[107] That is to say, the liberty of indifference.

custom ought to be maintained against the undertakings of innovators unless the latter produce better laws. Their views ought to be rejected from the fact alone that they are not better than the established opinions even though they be not worse than the abuses they fight against. Submit to custom, these people ought to be told, or offer us something better. With much greater reason it is just to reject the system of the Spinozist since it only gets us away from some difficulties in order to get us into much more inexplicable perplexities. If the difficulties were equal on both sides, the common system ought to be maintained since, in addition to the privilege of possession, it would also have the advantage of promising us great benefits for the future and giving us a thousand consolations for the miseries of this life. Is it not some consolation in misfortune to flatter oneself that the prayers that are addressed to God will be answered and that in any case he will reward us for our patience and will furnish us with a magnificent compensation? It is a great consolation to be able to flatter ourselves that other men will have some regard for the dictates of their conscience and the fear of God. This means that the ordinary theory is at the same time truer and more convenient than the theory of impiety.[110] To have good grounds for rejecting Spinoza's hypothesis, it would suffice then to be able to say, "It is open to no fewer objections than the Christian hypothesis." Thus, every writer who shows that Spinozism is obscure and false in its first principles and perplexed with impenetrable and contradictory absurdities in its consequences ought to be considered as having well refuted it, even though he does not answer all the objections clearly. Let us reduce the whole matter to a few words. The ordinary hypothesis, compared with that of the Spinozists, in those matters that are clear has more evidence of truth. And when it is compared with the other with regard to the obscure matters, it seems less opposed to the natural light; and besides, it promises us an infinite happiness after this life and brings us a thousand consolations in this one, whereas the other promises us nothing beyond this world and deprives us of confidence in our prayers, and in the remorse of our neighbors. The ordinary hypothesis is then preferable to the other.

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[110] I have already said in the article "Socinus, Faustus," remark I, that it is in the interest of each individual person that all the others be conscientious and God-fearing. [The article "Socinus" is not included in these selections.]

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Q. *(There is no philosopher who has less right to deny the apparition of spirits.)* I have said elsewhere[130] that when it is supposed that a supremely perfect spirit has produced creatures from his bosom out of nothing without being determined to it by his nature, but by a free choice of his will, it can be denied that angels exist.[131] If you ask why such a creator did not produce other spirits than the soul of man, you will be told that such was his pleasure. . . . You cannot make any reasonable answer to this unless you can prove the fact, namely, that there are angels. But when it is supposed that the creator has not acted freely and that he has used up all his power without choice or rule, and that, in addition, thought is one of his attributes, it would be ridiculous if one were to maintain that there are no demons. It ought to be believed that the creator's thought is modified not only in the bodies of men, but also throughout the universe, and that in addition to the animals we know there are an infinite number we do not know, and which surpass us in knowledge and malice as much as we surpass dogs and cattle in these respects. For it would be the most unreasonable thing in the world to imagine that the mind of man is the most perfect modification that an infinite being could produce, acting in accordance with the full power of his forces. We do not perceive any natural connection between the understanding and the brain. That is why we ought to believe that a creature without a brain is as capable of thinking as a creature organized as we are. What then could have led Spinoza to deny what is said about spirits? Why did he believe that there is nothing in the world capable of exciting in our machine the sight of a specter, of making some noise in our room, and of causing all the magical phenomena that are mentioned in books? Was it because he believed that, in order to produce all these effects, it would be necessary to have a body as bulky as man's; and that in this case, demons could not subsist in air,

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130 In remark D of the article "Ruggeri" [not included in these selections].

131 If we put aside the authority of Scripture and only reason philosophically.

or enter our houses, or disappear from our sight? But this idea would be ridiculous. The mass of flesh of which we are composed is less an aid than an obstacle to the mind and its powers; I mean its mediate powers, or the faculty it has of applying the instrument most capable of producing the greatest effects. This is the faculty that gives rise to the most surprising actions of man. We are shown this by thousands of examples. An engineer, who is as small as a dwarf, lean and pale, accomplishes more than two thousand of the strongest savages could do. An animated machine, much smaller than an ant might be capable of producing greater effects than an elephant. It could find the invisible parts of animals and plants and place itself on the first springs of our brain and open the valves there that would result in our seeing phantoms, hearing noises, and so on.[133] If doctors knew the basic fibers and combinations of parts in vegetables, minerals, and animals, they would also know what instruments would put them out of order; and they could apply these instruments as would be necessary to produce new arrangements that would convert good meats into poison, and poisons into good meats. Such doctors would be incomparably more capable than Hippocrates; and were they small enough to enter the brain and the viscera, they could cure whom they wished and could also cause the strangest illnesses that have ever been imagined whenever they wished. All this reduces to this question, "Is it possible that an invisible modification may have more knowledge and more wickedness than man?" If Spinoza takes the negative, he does not know the consequences of his own hypothesis and proceeds rashly and without principles. A long dissertation might be written on this subject, examining and obviating all his subterfuges and objections. . . .

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R. *(The dispute by the* Spinozists *on miracles is merely playing with words.)* The common opinion of orthodox theologians is that God produces miracles immediately, whether he makes use of

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[133] Note in passing that nothing can be more improper than to dispute whether angels who appear form their own bodies or borrow those of some dead men. All this is useless. It suffices that they move the optical and acoustical nerves in the same way the light reflected from a human body and the air that comes out of a human mouth moves them.

creatures, or whether he does not. Both these methods constitute incontestable proof that he is above nature; for if he produces anything without employing other causes, he can get along without nature; and in the second method he never employs other causes in a miracle unless he has turned them from their normal course. This shows that they depend on his will, that he suspends their power when he sees fit, or that he applies it in a different manner from their usual determination. The Cartesians who make him the immediate cause of all the effects of nature suppose that when he performs miracles, he does not observe the general laws he has established. He makes an exception to them, and he deals with bodies completely differently than he would have done if he had followed the general laws. On this they say that if there were general laws by which God had pledged to move bodies according to the desires of angels, and if an angel had wished that the waters of the Red Sea be parted, then the passage of the Israelites could not be properly called a miracle. This consequence, which follows necessarily from their principle, prevents their definition of a miracle from having all the advantages that might be desired. It would have been better then if they had said that all of the effects contrary to the general laws known to us are miracles; and by this means, the plagues of Egypt and all the other extraordinary events reported in Scripture would be miracles, properly speaking. Now, to show the insincerity and illusions of the Spinozists on this subject, it is sufficient to observe that when they reject the possibility of miracles, they offer this reason, that God and nature are the same entity, so that if God did something contrary to the laws of nature, he would have done something against himself, which is impossible. Speak clearly and unequivocally; say that the laws of nature have not been produced by a free lawgiver who knew what he did but were the result of a blind and necessary cause, and that therefore nothing can happen that is contrary to those laws. You will then be offering your own thesis against miracles. This would be a *petitio principii* [begging the question]; but at least you will be speaking frankly. Let us get them down from these generalities. Let us ask them what they think of the miracles reported in Scripture. They will absolutely deny everything about them that they cannot attribute to some clever contrivance. Let us set aside the effrontery involved in listing facts of this nature as false. Let us direct the attack against their principles. Have you not said that the power of nature is infinite? And would it be so if there were

nothing in the universe that could restore a dead man to life? Would it be so if there were only one way of making men, that of ordinary generation? Have you not said that nature's knowledge is infinite? You deny that divine understanding, in which, in our view, the knowledge of all possible beings is reunited. But by dispersing that knowledge, you do not at all deny its infinity. You ought to say that nature knows all things, in about the same way that we say that man understands all languages. One single man does not understand them all; but some understand one, some another. Can you deny that the universe does not contain anything that understands the construction of our body? If that were the case, you would fall into a contradiction. You would no longer recognize that the knowledge of God was divided in an infinite number of ways. The manner in which our organs are constructed would not be known to him. Admit then, if you want to reason logically, that there is some modification that knows it. Admit that it is quite possible for nature to revive a dead body, and that your master got himself mixed up in his ideas and did not know the consequences of his theory when he said that if he had been able to convince himself of the resurrection of Lazarus, he would have broken his system into pieces and would have embraced without difficulty the ordinary faith of Christians.[136]

This suffices to prove to these people that they deny their hypotheses when they deny the possibility of miracles, that is, so that there will be no ambiguity, the possibility of the events recorded in Scripture.

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T. *(If he had reasoned logically, he would not have treated the fear of hell as chimerical.)* Let a person believe as much as he would like that this universe is not the work of God, and that it is not directed by a simple, spiritual nature, distinct from all bodies. He must at least admit that there are certain things that have intelligence and will, and that are jealous of their power. They exercise their power over other things, command them to do this or that, punish them, mistreat them, and avenge themselves with severity. Is the earth not full of these types of things? Does not each man know this by experi-

136 I have been assured that he said this to his friends.

ence? To think that all the beings of this kind are only on the earth, which is merely a point in comparison to the world, is certainly an entirely unreasonable view. Is it likely to be the case that reason, intelligence, ambition, hate, cruelty, be on the earth rather than elsewhere? Why? Could any good or bad reason be given for this? I do not believe so. Our eyes lead us to be convinced that the immense spaces we call the heavens, in which there are such rapid and active movements, are as capable as the earth of producing men and as worthy as the earth of being divided into several dominions. We do not know what goes on there; but if we only consult reason, it would be necessary for us to believe that it is very probable, or at least possible, that there are thinking beings there who extend their empire as well as their light on our world. The fact that we do not see them is no proof that we are unknown or indifferent to them. We are perhaps a part of their dominions. They make laws, and reveal them to us by means of the light of conscience, and are extremely angry with those who transgress them. It suffices that this be possible in order to make the atheists anxious; and there is only one good means of escaping from fear, that is, by believing that the soul is mortal. They would escape in this way the anger of these spirits, for otherwise they could be more formidable than God himself. I will explain myself. There are some people who believe in a God, a paradise, and a hell; but they deceive themselves into thinking that the infinite goodness of the supremely perfect being does not allow him to torment his own creatures for eternity. He is the father of all men, they say. He therefore paternally punishes those who disobey him; and after having made them see the error of their ways, he restores them to his good graces. This was the way Origen reasoned. Others suppose that God will deprive rebellious creatures of their existence, and that with the plea, "What end of labors do you grant, O great King?"[143] he will be appeased and moved to pity. They carry their illusions so far that they think that the eternal punishments that the Bible speaks of are only warnings. If such people did not know that there is a God, and by reasoning about what goes on in our world, they would convince themselves that elsewhere there are beings who are concerned about the human race; they would only liberate themselves from anxiety about dying if they believed in the mortality of the soul. For, if they believed it to be immortal, they might be afraid of falling into the hands of

[143] Virgil, *Aeneid* I. 241.

some savage master who had conceived some resentment against them because of their actions. It would be in vain that they might hope to escape after a few years of torment. A limited being may have no kind of moral perfection. It could easily resemble our Phalarises and our Neros, people capable of leaving their enemies in a dungeon forever if they were capable of possessing eternal authority. Will they hope that the evil-doing beings will not last forever? But how many atheists are there who claim that the sun never had a beginning and will never have an end? This is what I meant when I said that there are beings who might seem more formidable than God himself. One can have some hopes when considering a God who is infinitely good and perfect, and one might fear everything from an imperfect being. One cannot tell whether his wrath will last forever. Everyone knows the choice of the prophet David.[144]

To apply all this to a Spinozist, let us remember that he is obliged by his theory to admit the immortality of the soul since he considers himself as a modification of an essentially thinking being. Let us remember that he cannot deny that there are some modifications that get angry at other ones, who torture them, and who make their torments as great as they can, who send them to the galleys for the rest of their lives, and who would make this punishment eternal if death did not prevent it. Tiberius, Caligula, and a hundred others, are examples of these kinds of modifications. Let us remember that a Spinozist would make himself ridiculous if he did not admit that the universe is filled with ambitious, vexatious, jealous, and cruel modalities. For since the earth is filled with them, there is no reason to think that the air and the heavens are not likewise full of them. Let us remember, lastly, that the essence of human modifications does not consist in being clothed in large pieces of flesh. Socrates was Socrates the day of his conception, or a little afterwards.[145] All that he was at that time could subsist in its entirety after a mortal malady had made the circulation of the blood and the motions of the heart stop in the matter in

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144 Having to choose either to be defeated by his enemies or to be afflicted by some scourge sent by God, he replied to the prophet Gad, "I am in a great strait; let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man" (II Samuel 24:14).

145 Spinoza, who was a maker of microscopes, ought to have believed that man is organized and alive in the seed, and that thus Socrates was Socrates before his mother conceived him.

which he was enlarged. He is therefore after his life the same modification that he was during his lifetime, considering only the essential features of his person. He does not at all escape justice then by death or avoid the caprice of his invisible persecutors. They can follow him wherever he goes and mistreat him in all the visible forms that he may assume.

These considerations could be employed to the practice of virtue to lead even those who stagnate in the impious views of similar sects, for reason desires that they chiefly fear having violated the laws revealed to their consciences. Such faults are the ones in which those invisible beings would be most likely interested in punishing.

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X. *(He would have been more formidable if he had employed all his strength to clarify a theory that is much in vogue among the Chinese.)* A Church Father made an admission that perhaps would not be pardoned today if offered by a philosopher. It is that even those who deny the deity and providence set forth probabilities as much for their cause as against their adversaries. "Some deny that there are gods; others say that they are doubtful whether there are any; but others assert that they exist but do not care about human affairs; and others affirm that they interpose in the affairs of mortals and administer them. As this is the case, and as but one of these opinions is true, they all oppose one another with arguments; and each of them has something probable to urge, either in defense of his own opinion, or in opposition to those of others."[146] If he were right, it would perhaps be chiefly with regard to those who suppose that there are a great number of souls in the universe distinct from one another, each one of which exists by itself and acts by an internal and essential principle. Some have more power than others, and so on. This is what the atheism that is so generally spread among the Chinese consists in. Here is how it is thought that they have little by little obscured the true ideas.[147] "God, that most pure and perfect being, at most has become the material soul of the whole world, or of its most beautiful part, the heavens. His providence and his power have become no more

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146 Arnobius, *Adversus gentes*.
147 La Loubère, *Relation de Siam*.

than a limited power and providence, although, however, much more extended than the power and prudence of men. . . . The doctrine of the Chinese has always ascribed spirits to the four parts of the world, to the stars, the mountains, rivers, plants, cities and their moats, houses and their hearths, and, in a word, to all things. And they do not think that all the spirits are good. They acknowledge that some of them are wicked and are the immediate causes of the evils and disasters to which human life is subject. . . . Therefore, since the soul of man was, in their opinion, the source of all the vital actions of man, they thus ascribed to the sun a soul that is the source of its qualities and motions. And on this principle, souls were diffused everywhere, causing in all bodies the actions that appear natural to those bodies. Nothing further is needed on this theory, to explain the whole economy of nature and to take the place of the omnipotence and infinite providence that they do not admit is in any spirit, not even that of the heavens. In truth, since it seems that man, using natural things for his food or for his comforts, has some power over natural things, the ancient opinion of the Chinese giving a proportionately similar power to all souls supposed that that of the heavens could act upon nature with a prudence and strength incomparably greater than human prudence or strength. But, at the same time, this theory recognized an internal force in the soul of each thing, independent by its nature of the power of the heavens, and which might sometimes act contrary to the designs of the heavens. The heavens governed nature in the manner of a powerful king. Other souls owed it obedience. It almost always forced them to give in, but sometimes some of them disobeyed." I admit that it is absurd to suppose several eternal souls, independent of one another, and unequal in strength. But this supposition appeared true to Democritus, to Epicurus, and to several other great philosophers. They admitted an infinite number of tiny bodies of different size and shape, uncreated, self-moving, and the like. This view is still very common in the Levant.[149] Those who contend that matter is eternal are never more reasonable than when they claim there is an infinite number of atoms; for if there can be two coeternal and independently existing beings, there can be one hundred billion of them, and so on to infinity. They even ought to say that there actually is an infinity of them because matter, no matter how

[149] See the anonymous work published in Amsterdam in 1690, entitled *Philosophia vulgaris refutata*.

small it is, contains distinct parts. And note carefully that all ancient thinkers were ignorant of the creation of matter, for they never departed from the axiom, "From nothing, nothing comes." They therefore did not know that it was absurd to acknowledge an infinite number of coeternal substances existing independently of one another. No matter how absurd that hypothesis may be, it is not subject to the dreadful difficulties that destroy Spinoza's. The former would account for many phenomena by assigning an active principle to each thing, a stronger one to some, a weaker one to others. Or, if they were all equal in strength, it would be necessary to say that those which are victorious have formed a more numerous alliance. I do not know whether there has ever actually been a Socinian who has said or believed that man's soul, not being produced out of nothing, exists and acts of and by itself. Its liberty of indifference would obviously flow from that.

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CC. *(A clarification of the objection I have developed from the immutability of God.)* You will find this objection above in remark N, paragraph II [p. 307, above]. It is necessary to defend it, since there are some people who assert that, to see that there is nothing to it, it is only required to note that no change ever happens to Spinoza's God in that it is a substance that is infinite, necessary, and so on. Let the whole universe change its face every moment, let the earth be reduced to ashes, let the sun be obscured, let the sea become light; there would only be a change of modifications. The one and only substance would still equally be an infinite, extended, thinking substance, and so on, with all the other substantial or essential attributes. In saying this, they set forth nothing but what has already been refuted;[157] but to show their error more clearly, I must point out here that they argue against me as if I had maintained that according to Spinoza the deity annihilates and reproduces himself successively. This is not at all my objection when I claim that he subjects the deity to change, and that he deprives him of his immutability. I am not, as they are, overthrowing the ideas of things and the meaning of words. What I understand by change is what the whole world has meant by this word since

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157 See remark N, paragraph II [p. 307, above].

reasoning began. I mean, I say, not the *annihilation* of a thing, its total destruction, or its reduction to nothing; but its passage from one state to another, the subject of the accidents that it ceases to have and those that it commences to acquire remaining the same. The learned, the ordinary people, mythology and philosophy, poets and scientists, have always been in agreement on this idea and this locution. The fabulous metamorphoses so much sung by Ovid and the actual generations explained by the philosophers both equally supposed the conservation of substance and retained it immutably as the successive subject of the old and the new form. Only the unfortunate theological disputes in Christendom have confused these concepts, and furthermore it must be admitted that even the most ignorant missionaries get back on the right track as soon as the question is no longer about the Eucharist. Ask them in any other case what is meant by the change of one thing into another, the conversion, the transelementation, and the transubstantiation of one thing into another; and they will answer, "This means, for example, that from wood fire is made, that from bread blood is made, from blood flesh is made, and so on." They are no longer thinking of the improper language consecrated to the controversy over the Eucharist, that bread is converted and transubstantiated into the body of our Lord. This way of speaking is not at all suitable to the doctrine that one wishes to explain by it. It is as if one should say that the air in a cask is transformed, changed, converted, and transubstantiated into the wine that is poured into the cask. The air goes somewhere else, and the wine follows it in the same place. There is not the slightest indication of metamorphosis from one into the other, nor is there any more in the mystery of the Eucharist, as explained by the Roman Catholics. The bread is annihilated with respect to its substance. The body of our Lord puts itself in the place of the bread and is not the subject of inherence of the accidents of that bread, which are preserved without their substance. But, once more, this is the only case in which the missionaries misuse the words "change," "conversion," or "transelementation," of one being into another. On all other occasions, they suppose, along with the rest of the human race: (1) that it is of the essence of transformations that the subject of the destroyed forms subsists under the new forms, (2) that this conservation of the subject in everything essential to it does not prevent it from undergoing an internal change, which is both properly so called and is inconsistent with immutable

beings. Let the Spinozists therefore cease to think that they are permitted to create a new language contrary to the concepts of all mankind. If they have any residue of sincerity, they will admit that in their theory God is subject to all the vicissitudes and all the revolutions that the prime matter of Aristotle is subject to in the theory of the Peripatetics. Now, what can be more absurd than to maintain that by supposing Aristotle's theory, matter is a substance that never undergoes any change?

But, to embarrass the Spinozists greatly, it is only necessary to request that they define what change is. They will have to define it in such a way that it will be in no way different from the total destruction of a subject, or that it will apply to that one and only substance they call God. If they define it in the first way, they will make themselves more ridiculous than the transubstantiators; and if they define it in the second way, they will let me win.

I shall add that the argument they use to escape from my objections proves too much. For if it were sound, they would have to claim that there has not been, and there never will be, any change in the universe, and that all change, the very greatest or the very smallest, is impossible. Let us prove this consequence. "The reason why," they say, "God is immutable is because, as a substance and as an extension, nothing ever happens to him, and no change can ever happen to him. He is extended substance under the form of fire, as well as under the form of wood, which is turned into fire, and so on with regard to other cases." I am going to prove to them by this argument that the modifications themselves are immutable. Man is, according to them, a modification of God. They admit that man is subject to change since he is, for example, sometimes gay, and sometimes sad, sometimes willing something, sometimes not. This is not change, I will say to them, for he is no less a man in sorrow than in joy. The essential attributes of man remain immutable in him, whether he wills to sell his house, or whether he wills to keep it. Let us consider the most inconstant of men. . . . At random let us suppose someone who has given his heart and lips in turn to all the religions in less than two years, who has tasted all of the conditions of human life, who has gone from being a merchant to being a soldier to being a monk, and then has gotten married and divorced, and after that worked in the registry office, in financial affairs, and then ecclesiastical ones, and so on. Let the Spinozists go and tell him, "You have been very inconstant." "Who

me?" he will answer them. "You are being funny. I have never changed. A mountain has not continued more invariably to be a mountain than I to be a man from the moment of my birth." What can they reply to this *ad hominem* argument? Is it not completely evident that the entire essence of the human species subsists in man whether he wishes the same thing, or whether he hates today what he loved yesterday and changes his inclination more often than his shirt?

Let us use an example that is most proper for a country where people have sea legs. Let us suppose that a Spinozist returning from Batavia reports that his voyage lasted longer than usual because the winds changed almost every day. "You are mistaken," he would be told. "The winds never change. You can rightly say that they blow sometimes from the north, sometimes from the south, and so on, but they always retain the essence of wind. They do not change, then, as wind; and they are as immutable as your one and only substance of the universe; for according to you, it is immutable because it never changes state in relation to its essential properties. No more does the wind ever change its state in relation to its quality as wind. It always retains the entire nature and essence of it. It is therefore as immutable as your deity."

Let us go on, and let us say that even when a man is burned alive, no change happens to him. He was a modication of divine nature when he was alive. Is he not so in the flames, or in the form of ashes? Could he lose the attributes that constitute a modification? As a modification, could he undergo any change? If he changed in this respect, would it not be necessary to maintain that the flame is not a mode of extension? Could Spinoza hold this view without contradicting himself and without destroying his theory? This is enough to show the error of those who claim that I have not sufficiently proven that this theory subjects God to change. One cannot avoid my argument without establishing that the modifications themselves are immutable, and that no change ever occurs, neither in the thoughts of man, nor in the dispositions of the body, which is completely absurd and contrary to the doctrines the Spinozists cannot avoid accepting. For they do not dare deny that the modifications of infinite substance are subject to corruption and generation.

Let us ask them to grant for a moment, without conceding anything, that, for the sake of argument, they let us consider Socrates a substance. Then they would have to say that each particular thought of Socrates

is a modification of the substance. But, is it not true that Socrates, in passing from affirmation to negation, changes his thought, which is a real internal change, and properly so called? However, Socrates remains always a substance, and an individual of the human species, whether he affirms, whether he denies, whether he desires or whether he rejects this or that. It cannot then be concluded that he is immutable because he does not change at all as a man; and in order to be able to say that he is mutable and that he actually changes, it is sufficient that his modifications are not always the same. Let us give back to the Spinozists what they have lent us, and let us grant them in turn, for the sake of argument, that Socrates is only a modification of the divine substance. Let us grant them, I say, that his relation to this substance is like the relation of the thoughts of Socrates to the substance of Socrates in the ordinary view. Then, in view of the fact that the change of these thoughts is a sound reason for maintaining that Socrates is not an immutable being, but rather a changeable one, and a moveable substance that varies a great deal, it must be concluded that the substance[160] of God undergoes a change and a variation, properly called, every time that Socrates, one of his modifications, changes state. It is therefore a thesis of an evident truth that, in order for a being to pass actually and really from one state to another, it suffices that it change in respect to its modifications. And, if more be demanded, that is to say, that it should lose its essential attributes, this would grossly confuse *annihilation* or total destruction, with alteration or change. . . .

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DD. *(Whether it is true, as I have been told that several people claim, that I have not understood Spinoza's theory at all.)* I have heard this from several quarters, but nobody has been able to tell me what those who make this judgment base it on. Thus, I cannot answer them precisely, or examine if I ought to give in to their arguments since they are unknown to me. I can only justify myself in a general way; and I think that I can say that, if I did not understand the proposition I undertook to refute, it is not my fault. I would speak with less confi-

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[160] Note that Aristotle, in *Categories* V, has placed among the properties of substance that of remaining the same in number under contrary qualities.

dence had I written a book against Spinoza's entire system, following it page by page. No doubt, it would have happened more than once that I did not understand what he intended; and it is improbable that he completely understood himself and could make all the consequences of his hypothesis intelligible in great detail. But, since I stopped at one single proposition which is stated in very few words, which seems to be clear and precise, and which is the foundation of the entire structure, it must be the case either that I have understood it or that it contains some ambiguities entirely unworthy of a system-builder. In any case, I can console myself that I have given the same sense to Spinoza's proposition that his other adversaries have given it and that his followers can give no better answer than to say that he has not been understood. This reproach did not hinder the last person who wrote against him from understanding the proposition in question just as I did, an evident sign that their accusation is groundless.

But, to say something less general, here is what I suppose in my objections. I attribute these teachings to Spinoza: (1) that there is only one substance in the world; (2) that this substance is God; and (3) that all particular beings with corporeal extension—the sun, the moon, plants, animals, men, their motions, their ideas, their imaginings, their desires—are modifications of God. I now ask the Spinozists, has your master taught this, or has he not? If he did teach this, it cannot be said that my objections suffer from the defect called *ignoratio elenchi* (ignorance of the state of the question); for they suppose that such was his doctrine and attack it only on these grounds. I am then safe, and one would be wrong every time it was claimed that I refuted what I did not understand. If you say that Spinoza did not teach the three doctrines stated above, I ask you why, then, did he express himself exactly as would men who had the greatest passion in the world to convince the reader that they taught these three things? Is it fair or commendable to employ the common language, without attaching the same ideas to words that other men do and without announcing the new sense in which they are to be taken? But, to discuss this a little, let us see where the misunderstanding may be. I have not been mistaken with regard to the word "substance," for I have not opposed Spinoza's view on this point. I have admitted what he supposes, that for something to deserve the name of substance, it must be independent of all causes, or exist by itself eternally and necessarily. I do not believe that I could have been mistaken in imputing

to him the view that God alone has the nature of a substance. I believe, then, that if there were any mistake in my objections, it would consist only in that I have understood by "modalities," "modifications," and "modes" something different from what Spinoza intended by these words. But, once again, if I were mistaken on this point, it would be his fault. I took these terms in the sense that they have always been understood, or at least in the sense that all the new philosophers understand them;[165] and I had the right to assume that he took them in this same sense since he had not warned the world that he took them in some other sense. The general doctrine of the philosophers is that the idea of being contains, immediately under it, two species—substance and accident—and that substance subsists by itself . . . , and an accident subsists in some other being. . . . They add that "to subsist by itself" signifies only "not being dependent on any subject of inhesion"; and since this agrees, according to them, with matter, angels, man's soul, they admit two kinds of substance, one uncreated, the other created; and they subdivide created substance into two species. One of these two is matter, the other is our soul. With regard to accidents they all agreed, before the wretched disputes that divided Christendom, that they depend so essentially on their subjects of inhesion that they cannot exist without them. This was their specific characteristic, which differentiated them from substances. The doctrine of transubstantiation overthrew this whole idea and forced philosophers to say that an accident can subsist without its subject. They had to say this since they believed, on the one hand, that after consecration the substance of the bread of the Eucharist no longer subsisted, and they saw, on the other hand, that all the accidents of the bread subsisted as before. They therefore admitted a real distinction between a substance and its accidents, and a reciprocal separability between those species of beings, which would result in the fact that each of them could exist without the other. But some of them continued to say that there were accidents whose distinction from their subject was not real, and which could not subsist outside of it. They called these accidents "modes."[166] Descartes, Gassendi, and, in

[165] I employ this restriction because of the difference that exists between the theory of the modern Aristotelians and that of the Cartesians, Gassendists, etc., concerning the nature of accidents. This difference is significant, but it amounts to the same thing with respect to the objections against Spinoza.

[166] Of this kind are union, duration, and ubiquity.

general, all those who have abandoned Scholastic philosophy, have denied that an accident is separable from its subject in such a way that it could subsist after its separation, and have ascribed to all accidents the nature of those that are called "modes" and have employed the term "mode," "modality," or "modification," rather than that of "accident." Now, since Spinoza had been a great Cartesian, it is reasonable to suppose that he ascribed to these terms the same sense that Descartes did. If this is the case, by "modification of a substance" he only understood a way of being that has the same relation to substance as shape, motion, rest, and location have to matter, and as pain, affirmation, love, and the like, have to man's soul. For these are what the Cartesians call "modes." They acknowledge no others than these, from which it appears that they have kept the old idea of Aristotle according to which accidents are of such a nature that they are no part of their subject, that they cannot exist without it, and that the subject can lose them without prejudicing its existence. All this agrees with roundness, motion, rest, with relation to a stone, and does not agree any less with respect to pain and affirmation with regard to man's soul. If our Spinoza has joined the same idea to what he calls "modification of substance," it is certain that my objections are just. I have attacked him directly according to the true sense of his words. I have rightly understood his theory, and I have refuted it in its actual sense. In short, I am safe from the accusation I am examining. But if he had the same conception as Descartes of matter (or extension) and the human soul, and if, however, he did not want to ascribe the status of substance either to extension or to our souls, because he believed that a substance is a being that does not depend on any cause, I admit that I have attacked him without grounds, have attributed to him a view that he does not hold. This is what remains for me to examine.

Having once set forth that substance is that which exists by itself, as independently of every efficient cause as of every material one or every subject of inhesion, he could not say that either matter or men's souls were substances. And since, according to the usual view, he divided being into only two species, namely substance and modification of substance, he had to say that matter and men's souls were only modifications of substance. No orthodox person will disagree with him that, according to this definition of substance, there is only one single substance in the universe, and that substance is God. It will only be a question of knowing whether he subdivides the modification

of substance into two species. In case he makes use of this subdivision and means that one of those two species is what the Cartesians and other Christian philosophers call "created substance," and the other species what they call "accident" or "mode," there will be only a dispute about words between him and them; and it will be very easy to bring his whole system back to orthodoxy and to make his sect vanish; for a person is only inclined to be a Spinozist because he believes that Spinoza has completely overturned the Christian philosophers' system of the existence of an immaterial God governing all things with a perfect liberty. From which we can conclude in passing that the Spinozists and their adversaries agree completely about the meaning of the phrase "modification of substance." They both believe that Spinoza employed this term only to designate a being that has the same nature as what the Cartesian philosophers call "modes," and that he never understood by this term a being that had the properties or nature of what we call "created substance."

Those who should insist strongly that I have been mistaken might suppose that Spinoza only rejected the designation, "substance," given to beings dependent on another cause with respect to their production, their conservation, and their operation . . . as is said in the Schools. They could say that, while retaining the entire reality of the thing, he avoided using the word, because he thought that a being so dependent on its cause could not be called . . . "a being subsisting by itself," which is the definition of substance. I reply to them, as I did above, that there will then be only a pure logomachy, or dispute about words, between him and the other philosophers, and that I will admit my mistake with the greatest pleasure in the world if it is the case that Spinoza actually was a Cartesian but had been more careful than Descartes in employing the word "substance," and that all of the impiety attributed to him consists only in a misunderstanding. He meant to say nothing else, it will be added, than what is found in the books of the theologians, namely that the immensity of God fills heaven and earth and all the imaginary spaces to infinity,[168] that consequently his essence penetrates and locally surrounds all other beings, so that it is in him that "we live and move" (Acts 17:28), and that nothing has been produced outside of him. For, since he fills all spaces, he can place a body in himself only, in view of the fact that outside of him

[168] Note that the Cartesian theologians explain the immensity of God in another way.

there is nothing. Besides, we know that all beings are incapable of existing without him. It is then true that the properties of Cartesian modes agree with what are called "created substances." These substances are in God and cannot subsist outside of him and without him. It must not then be found strange that Spinoza called them "modifications"; but on the other hand, he did not deny that there was a real distinction, and that each of them constituted a particular principle of either actions or passions in such a manner that one does what the other does not do, and that when it is denied of one what is affirmed of the other, this is done in accordance with the rules of logic, without anyone being able to object to Spinoza that it follows from his principles that two contradictory principles are true of one and the same subject at the same time.

All this discourse has no purpose, and if one wants to get to the point, one ought to answer this precise question: Does the true and proper characteristic of a modification belong to matter with respect to God, or does it not? Before answering me, wait until I explain to you, by examples, what a characteristic of a modification is. It is to be in a subject in the way in which motion is in a body, and thought is in man's soul, and the form of a bowl is in a vase that we call a bowl. It is not sufficient to be a modification of the divine substance to subsist in the immensity of God, to be penetrated with it, to be surrounded by it on all sides, to exist by virtue of God, and not to be able to exist without him or outside him. It would also be necessary that the divine substance be the subject of inherence of a thing, just as in the ordinary view, the human soul is the subject of inherence of feeling and desire, pewter is the subject of inherence of the form of the bowl, and the body is the subject of inherence of motion, rest, and shape. Answer me now; and if you say that according to Spinoza the substance of God is not in that way the subject of inherence of that extension, or motion, or human thoughts, I will admit to you that you make him an orthodox philosopher who did not deserve to have the objections made against him that have been offered, and who only deserved to have been reproached for having gone through so much trouble to embrace a view that everyone knows and for having constructed a new system that is only built on the ambiguity of a word. If you say that he claimed that divine substance is the subject of inherence of matter and of all the varieties of extension and thought, in the same sense that according to Descartes extension is

the subject of inherence of motion and man's soul is the subject of inherence of sensations and passions, then I have all that I ask for. That is exactly how I understood Spinoza, and it is on this that I based all my objections.

To sum up all this, it is a question of fact concerning the true sense of the word "modification" in Spinoza's system. Must it be taken for the same thing that is commonly called "created substance," or must it be taken in the sense it has in Descartes' system? I believe that the latter is correct, for in the other sense Spinoza would have acknowledged creatures distinct from divine substance and who have been made either out of nothing or from a matter distinct from God. Now it would be easy to prove by a great number of passages in his books that he admits neither of these two things. Extension, according to him, is an attribute of God. It follows from this that God is essentially, eternally, and necessarily an extended substance, and that extension is as proper to him as existence. From which it follows that the particular varieties of extension, which make up the sun, earth, trees, bodies of beasts, bodies of men, and so on, are in God in the way in which the School philosophers suppose that they are in prime matter. Now, if these philosophers supposed that prime matter is a simple and perfectly unique substance, they would conclude that the sun and the earth are really the same substance. It must be the case then that Spinoza came to the same conclusion. If he did not say that the sun is composed of divine extension, he would have to admit that the sun's extension has been made from nothing; but he denies creation, and he is therefore obliged to say that the substance of God is the material cause of the sun, is what composes the sun. . . , and, consequently, that it is not distinct from God[170] but is God himself and God entirely, since according to him God is not a being composed of parts. Let us suppose for a moment that a mass of gold has the strength to convert itself into plates, dishes, candlesticks, bowls, and the like. It would not be at all distinct from these dishes and plates. And if one adds that it is a simple mass, not composed of parts, it will be certain that it is entirely in each dish and in each candlestick, for if it were not entirely there, it would then be composed of parts, which is contrary to the supposition. Then these reciprocal or convertible propositions would be true, "The candlestick is the mass of gold, the mass of

170 Matter, Aristotle says in *Physics* I. 9, remains in the effect that it produces.

gold is the candlestick. The candlestick is the entire mass of gold, the entire mass of gold is the candlestick." This is the picture of the God of Spinoza; he has the power to change or modify himself into earth, moon, sea, tree, and so on, and he is absolutely one and not composed of any parts. It is then true that it can be asserted that the earth is God, that the moon is God, that the earth is God entirely, that the moon is also, that God is the earth, that he is the moon, that God entirely is the earth, that God entirely is the moon.

There can only be three ways in which the modifications of Spinoza are in God, but none of these ways is that which the other philosophers say of created substance. It is in God, they say, as in its efficient and transitive cause, and consequently, it is actually and totally distinct from God. But according to Spinoza, creatures are in God either as an effect is in its material cause, or as an accident is in its subject of inhesion, or as the form of a candlestick is in the pewter of which it is composed. The sun, moon, and trees, in that they are three dimensional, are in God as in the material cause of which their extension is composed. There is then an identity between God and the sun, and so on. The same trees, in so far as they possess a form that distinguishes them from a stone, are in God as the form of a candlestick is in the pewter. To be a candlestick is only one of the pewter's ways of being. The motion of bodies and the thoughts of men are in God as the accidents of the Peripatetics are in a created substance; they are entities inherent in their subjects, and which are not composed of them and are not part of them. See below, footnote 171.

I am not unaware that an apologist for Spinoza[172] maintains that this philosopher does not attribute a corporeal extension to God, but only an intelligible extension,* which cannot be imagined. But if the

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[171] Note this difference, that the accidents of the Aristotelians are really distinct from their subject of inhesion, and that Spinoza cannot say this of the modifications of divine substance, for if they were composed of it, they would be made out of nothing. Spinoza would admit this. He would not cavil as the Peripatetics do when it is proven to them that the accidents would be created if they were distinct from their substance. See the *Journal de Trevoux,* June 1702.

[172] Kuffalaer, *Artis ratiocinandi.* Observe that he carries on very much against Blyenberg, who had said that Spinoza attributed corporeal extension to God. Note also that he refutes a certain Adrian Verwer, who had said something against Spinoza's theory.

* [This is Malebranche's term to denote the kind of conceptual reality that exists in the mind of God.]

extension of bodies that we see and imagine is not God's extension, then where does it come from, and how has it been made? If it has been made from nothing, then Spinoza is orthodox, and there is no novelty in his system. If it has been produced from the intelligible extension of God, it is still a real creation; for intelligible extension, being only an idea and not really possessing three dimensions, cannot furnish the stuff or the matter of the extension formally existent outside the understanding. Besides this, if two species of extension are distinguished, one intelligible that belongs to God, the other imaginable that belongs to bodies,* it would be necessary to admit two subjects of these extensions, distinct from one another; and then the unity of substance is overthrown; and the entire edifice of Spinoza falls to the ground. Let us say then that his apologist does not resolve the difficulty and creates still greater ones.

The Spinozists could take advantage of the doctrine of transubstantiation; for if they will consult the writings of the Spanish Scholastics, they will find an infinite number of subtleties there to give some answer to the arguments of those who say that the same man cannot be a Mohammedan in Turkey and a Christian in France, sick in Rome and healthy at Vienna. But I cannot tell, after all, if they will not find themselves obliged to compare their theory with the mystery of the Trinity in order to extricate themselves from the contradictions with which they are overwhelmed. If they do not say that the modifications of God, Plato, Aristotle, this horse, this monkey, this tree, this stone, are so many personalities, which, although *identified* with the same substance, can each be a particular and determinate principle, and distinct from the other modifications, they can never parry the blow that can be struck against them concerning the principle that "two contradictory terms cannot belong to the same subject at the same time." Some day perhaps they will say that just as the three persons of the Trinity, without being distinct from the divine substance, according to the theologians, and without having any absolute attribute that is not numerically the same in all of them, do not fail to have, each one of them, properties that can be denied of the others, so nothing stops Spinoza from admitting an infinite number of modalities or personalities in the divine substance, one of which does

* [The contrast here seems to be between something that can be intellectually understood and something that is just an image in the imagination, which is understood here as a lesser faculty of the mind.]

something that the others do not do. This will not be a real contradiction, since the theologians acknowledge a virtual distinction . . . with respect to the susceptibility of the two terms that are contradictory. But as the subtle Arriaga judiciously remarks, on the subject of the metaphysical degrees,[173] which some men would maintain are capable of receiving two contradictory propositions: to undertake to transfer to natural things what Revelation teaches us about the nature of God would be to ruin philosophy completely; for this would open the door to proving that there is no real difference between creatures.[174]. . . Here is the great debt we owe to Spinoza: he takes away from us, with all the force he commands, the most necessary of all principles. For if it were not certain that at the same time the same thing cannot be such and such and not such and such, it would be useless to meditate or to reason. See what Averroës said.[176]

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EE. *(The place that I attack . . . is the one that Spinozists care least to defend.)* I have attacked the supposition that extension is not a composite being, but one unique substance numerically; and I have attacked this rather than any other part of the system because I know that the Spinozists say that it is not here that the difficulties lie. They think they are much more perplexed when they are asked how thought and extension can be united in one and the same substance. There is something strange in this; for if it is certain from the concepts in our minds that extension and thought have no affinity with one another, it is even more obvious that extension is composed of parts actually distinct from one another; and yet they are more aware of the first difficulty than the second and treat the latter as a bagatelle compared to the other. I then believed that it was necessary to give them occasion to have the following thought, "If our system is so hard to defend in a part that we thought had no need of help, how then will we repel the attacks of the weak parts?"

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173 This is what they call the attributes that constitute the nature of man: being, substance, body, living, animal, rational. It is agreed that they are not distinct one from the other, but really one and the same entity.

174 Arriaga, *Disput. V Logica,* Sec. II, no. 29.

176 Cf. Fonseca, *In metaphys. Aristotel.,* Bk. IV, chap. 3.